

Feb. 03, 2009

Health and Human Services Joint Approp. Subcommittee
Re: Review of DPHHS budget for Dept. of Family Services
Greetings Rep. Theresa Henry, D-Missoula, Chairperson
And Committee Members:

I am Nancy Marks. I have run a small ranch for 20 years on the east side of Canyon Ferry Lake at Townsend. I lost my only son at age 11 in a tragic drowning accident. Five years later in 2000 my husband and I fostered, then adopted two children ages 5 and 8.

We raised them with care and attention. They attended school activities, 4-H, music lessons and martial arts classes. We tried to teach them life's lessons through ranch activities. We had financial support from the Medicaid and private donors for special dental, dermatological and podiatry care.

They were hard kids to reach. Throughout we had the once-a-month visit from the social worker, and occasionally, help from a therapeutic aide. No matter how hard we tried, nothing was working. So when I asked the state for more help, we moved to a higher level of care. We began receiving weekly inhome visits through outpatient care from a private provider. Eventually my son who came to us badly neglected in his birth home, went to residential care. He has since gone to another group home for further treatment. From 2000 to the present he has had at least once a week private therapy.

Over the past nine years, our family has suffered a lot. My husband and I are divorced. I am now raising these children alone. They have required group therapy, private therapy and residential treatment. Sometimes I have driven the 40 miles to Helena three times weekly for therapy for the two of them. They are currently stable, and I am still upright.

I feel had we had more visits from our social worker, she/he could have headed off a lot of our troubles, and saved the state a bunch of money in terms of less private therapy, and no residential treatment.

In conclusion, my children and I could not remain a family without the financial support we receive from the Dept. of Family Services, the adoption subsidy and Medicaid. Please fund the services, and provide more social worker positions so these new foster and adoptive families can remain viable, and not need so many services to raise these most challenging children.

Nancy Marks
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